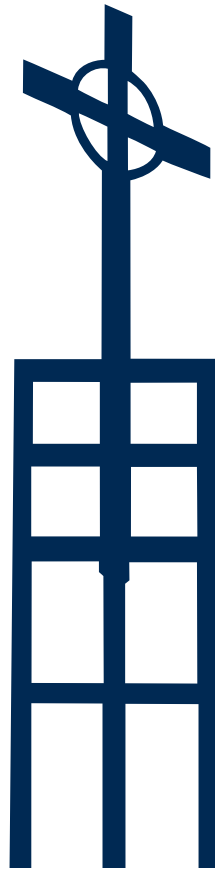




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# Faith Reflections

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Contributors:

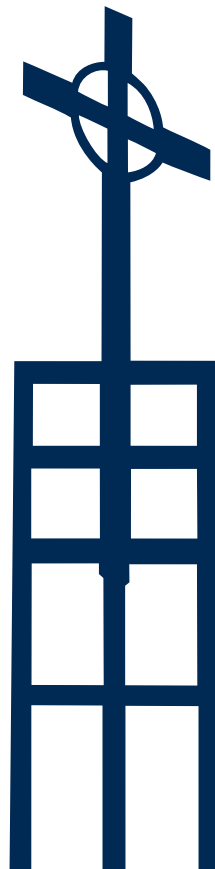
- Ron & Polly Bergerson*
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**Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth – then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.**  
Proverbs 8:25, 30-31

The most amazing thing about creation is that there is purpose for life. The universe is on a trajectory of life and in that trajectory of life, humanity is held unique within it. We are told that the Holy Creator, the Architect of Life, holds priority for us. Not only does the Creator hold priority for us but the Creator is actively, daily rejoicing and delighting in you and in me. Our God did not create only to stand back and declare the creation as good, but is active and rejoices in its goodness. We give thanks and praise in response to the goodness of God. This is Good News for us!

1

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1

## Prayer

Gracious and loving God,

I give you thanks for my blessed life! I have a home, clothes on my back, food on my table and people who love me and care about me. I give you thanks, also, for my faith home, Prince of Peace. My life is blessed by this community of faith in so many ways. I am encouraged, comforted, empowered and prayed for through the joys and sorrows of my life. Create in me a heart that responds to my blessings with a generous spirit. Use not only my heart and my hands to make a difference in the lives of people less fortunate, but my financial giving as well. Remind me, gracious God, that all that I have is yours. Inspire me to generously share in the incredible mission and ministry of Jesus Christ through Prince of Peace as we seek to care for your children, both near and far.

In your precious name I pray,

Amen.

18

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Amen.

18

**Choose this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.**

Joshua 24:15

Too often we think of giving to the church as a financial decision rather than as a stewardship decision. As a result, we may make a donation to the church, but we do not make a stewardship commitment. Making a stewardship decision means making a faith decision before we even consider the financial aspect of our giving. It is responding to a deeper calling, not reacting to a quick accounting.

Lord, first let me give myself to you, and then let my decisions grow out of what I believe and what you call me to be.

17

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**For whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.**

1 John 5:4

Since all believers are born of God, we are all one family. The old covenant impossibilities have given way to the “all things are possible” Good News. With the Gospel, we cannot help but love and give generously with the life-changing kind of love God has given us. Since we have fellowship with God by faith in Jesus, we also share in fellowship with one another. We may not feel like conquerors of the world’s ways, but overcoming the world depends not on our own personal feelings or experiences. The conquering power that brings the world to its knees is faith. God triumphs in us through Christ. The person who wins out over the world’s ways is simply the one who believes Jesus is the Son of God. Our faith has won the battle for us. Thanks be to God, Amen.

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2

**If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.**

James 1:5-6

We can ask God for wisdom, for healing of mind-body-spirit. God will answer to our belief that has no doubt. We must surrender to God's will, which is God's wisdom and love knowing our needs. As disciples we are to discipline ourselves to that surrender. Think of the gift of peace that doesn't toss us about like waves of the sea. God's love conquers all so with God we are safe and all is well. God gives to us according to our present and future needs, so our faith and gratitude makes a difference even if the present circumstances do not look like God's love. Let's pray for an increased trusting discipline for Prince of Peace.

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**So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.**

Luke 11:9

Seeking God's will is much more work than simply asking; it takes time, attention, listening, looking and searching. A journey of prayer will lead us far past asking, deep into new paths of seeking God's way for our lives. Seeking means finding God's will in our lives, and such seeking will undoubtedly change us, redirecting us in God's way.

Lord, I seek your will and your way in my life. Lead me down your paths for your name's sake. Open doors that I might find a new way of life.

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**Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.**

Matthew 7:1-5

The eye is the window to the soul. Consider the damage a speck can do in the natural eye. It takes more than a few drops to clean and refresh our natural eyes – how much more to clean and refresh the eye of our soul? God is showing me that I must be continually “watered” – a few drops will never be enough. I need a continuous washing to keep myself clean of sin, particularly the sin of ingratitude. I am constantly reminded as God's Spirit washes over me that God is calling me to live a life of gratitude. How thankful I am that God has washed me.

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15

**Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street.**

Lamentations 2:19

So many of our children in this world suffer from hunger, malnutrition, disease and lack of love. We cry out for them and then lift our hands and feet to do the Lord's will, rescuing them from undeserved hunger, realizing we are doing unto Christ when we do unto the least of them. We thank God that we can pack meals for Feed My Starving Children and donate and volunteer at Mission Outpost to bring faith to the hearts of those who have not seen the work of the Spirit of the Living God. Let's pray for God's abiding love to help us step out and serve.

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**Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**

Matthew 18:18

We have choice, we bind up, we provide for those not so fortunate, we believe that God's word is indeed true and hold fast to it. We let go or loose, set free, forgive and God is pleased. God knows our every move, not to judge us but to give help and encouragement for our journey. God in heaven releases us on earth to be Jesus to those who do not know Jesus. God's love is bound and loosed on earth by our decisions that are obedient to God. Father God, we ask for your divine guidance to keep our hands and feet moving to build your Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

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**Baptism... now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

1 Peter 3:21

Grace. Forgiveness. Freedom, forever. Our heritage as a people and a church. Baptized: belonging to God.

Our calling as baptized believers is a message we carry to all generations. One night Pastor Jeff spoke at Middle School Ministry on the topic of "Planting Seeds of the Gospel." He asked students to consider what difference does being a Christ-follower make to them? One boy couldn't articulate an answer. Finally he said, "I'm not sure how to answer that because I can't remember a time when I was not a Christian." His life is God's. It means everything to him.

Generous and faithful giving allows intergenerational ministry to expand, stretch, and challenge our faith. Lord, teach us to consider all generations in our pledge to love and serve our community. Amen.

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14

**For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.**  
Psalm 139:13-14

The other day, I gave blood at a blood drive and I was struck by the number of volunteers and employees, the amount of paper work, and the commitment from all the donors that it took to collect blood. They tell us that each pint of blood we donate can save up to three lives! In this age of artificial limbs, joint replacement surgeries, crowns on teeth and artificial heart valves, the one thing our technology can't reproduce is blood. Through God's creative power we are given the ability to reproduce blood.

Thank you, God, for our carefully crafted bodies. Help us to take care of our bodies so that we can serve you fully. As you freely give us life, blood and breath, inspire us to give freely of ourselves, our time and our possessions.

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Making time to grow spiritually is a daily challenge for most of us. We want to feel closer to God, but the challenges of daily life seem to take all our time. Our lives are filled to the brim. So, when do we find time to just be with God?

The answer to this question comes from a deeper question: Is my relationship with God a priority in my life? If the answer is, "yes," then the solution is simple. (Simple, not easy.) We need to prioritize our time with God. Make an appointment with God and then keep it.

Why not schedule 15 minutes every morning to just be with God? This could take several forms: reading Scripture, writing a letter to God, taking a prayer walk, reading devotional material or quietly meditating. These are just a few of the ways to make space for God in your life.

Throughout Scripture we see that Jesus gave his undivided attention to God in prayer. Let us follow Jesus' example in making space for God in our daily lives.

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6

**For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard... These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day... Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?**

Matthew 20:1, 12, 15

God created the world and gave us “dominion;” placed us in charge. This is a huge responsibility that we sometimes neglect. And sometimes there’s a sense of unfairness in how much we do and how much others don’t do. As workers in this global vineyard, we have unending opportunity to make good choices and work at the things that really matter to God. We can be part of a movement in the kingdom of God that arcs all of human history toward reconciliation, restoration, and redemption. What we do in this vineyard does matter! Our generosity does make a difference. In this vineyard we’re transforming lives and making a difference in God’s world.

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**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**

Matthew 22:37, 39

God describes how, and how fully, we are to love. God calls upon us to open every part of who we are to God – what we love, where we place our trust, and even how we think. If we love the Lord, our God, with all our hearts, souls, and minds, we withhold nothing. If we love our neighbors as ourselves, we share everything.

Dear God, we pray that each day and with each decision we make we will grow in the ideal love you have set before us. Open our minds to your will like a flower opens to the sunshine. Loosen our grip on our worldly achievements and possessions, and give us a new song to sing that brings glory to you and uplifts the people you put around us. Relieve us of all debts, except that which we owe to you.

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**Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.”**

Mark 12:43

I can envision it now, the treasury box is available for donations and the wealthy toss their offering in nonchalantly. It comes to the “poor widow” and she timidly places her “unworthy” gift into the box. Many of us think that our pledge or gift to the church is not worth anything because we cannot give as others do – so we will leave the giving to them. Jesus’ message is clear. It deals with the heart of the matter. The others gave what they wouldn’t miss; the widow gave from her thankful heart more than she could afford; and God took notice.

Lord Jesus: Bless us with the blessings of love and forgiveness and teach us to give from a heart of love and service. Amen.

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**We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.**

Matthew 14:17

I sent an email, but forgot the (.). The email came back. That little (.) dot made a big difference in communicating.

Sometimes, I feel like that dot. Insignificant, invisible in the BIG picture of what God is doing and how God works. However, like the dot in an email address, if something is missing, nothing happens. God is waiting to use you; God’s plans cannot be completed if your part is missing. In this verse, Jesus takes a little boy’s lunch and feeds more than 5,000 people. What can God do with your offering?

When you think, “My offering is worthless,” remember the dot. There is nothing too small for God to use. God blesses and enlarges everything we give. Father, I cannot do much, but I can do something. Bless my gift for your glory. Help me to impact my home, my church, and the world by being obedient and trusting you to enlarge my gift.

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**Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?**

Mark 8:37

Admit it or not; all the things we have are a gift from God. This is a gift that, in the end, we can't take with us, but that we can pass on. Being generous with what God has blessed us with through our time, talent and assets can bless our soul! We can be generous to our souls through our life and death as we place God first in our lives and share God's gifts. Bringing good to God's children is the perfect gift to others to recognize the generosity and love of God. To paraphrase Mark, "Is anything worth more than your soul?"

Lord: As you nourish our soul and our life, teach us to be open to sharing our time, talent, and money to the best of your service. Amen.

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**But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.**

1 Chronicles 29:14

God blessed David, but would not allow him to build God's temple because David was a warrior. Instead, God appointed David's son, Solomon, to move forward to build the House of the Lord. And David asked his followers to bring an offering to help pay for the building. They gave generously of their precious metals and gemstones, and David's prayer indicates that these followers of God were returning to God what was God's own. We are asked to reduce the debt of our building of God's house. Let God bless you in your giving to share in this so we can move forward in mission. Father, you have blessed us to be a blessing for others. Amen.

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